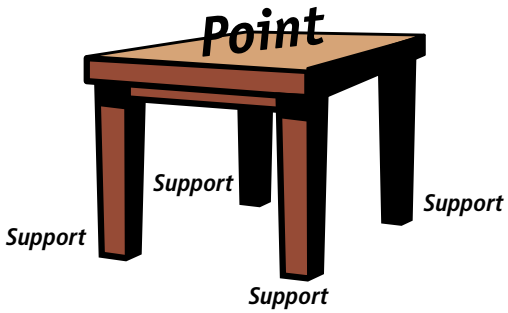
4 Main Ideas and Supporting Details in Writing

A **paragraph** is a series of sentences that support a main idea, or point. A paragraph typically starts with the main idea or point (also called the **topic sentence**), and the rest of the paragraph provides specific details to support and develop the point. The illustration below shows the relationship between point and support.



Outlining

An outline is a helpful way to plan a paper or to analyze it. An **outline** shows at a glance the point of a paper and a numbered list of the items that support the point. Here is an example of a paragraph and an outline of the paragraph.

> [1]People in my family love our dog Punch. [2]However, I have several reasons for wanting to get rid of Punch. [3]First of all, he knows I don't like him. [4]Sometimes he gives me an evil look and curls his top lip back to show me his teeth. [5]The message is clearly, "Someday I'm going to bite you." [6]Another reason to get rid of Punch is he sheds everywhere. [7]Every surface in our house is covered with Punch hair. [8]I spend more time brushing it off my clothes than I do mowing the lawn. [9]Last of all, Punch is an early riser, while (on weekends) I am not. [10]He will start barking and whining to go outside at 7 a.m., and it's my job to take care of him. [11]When I told my family that I had a list of good reasons for getting rid of Punch, they said they would make up a list of reasons to get rid of me.

Point: I have several reasons for wanting to get rid of Punch.

Supporting detail: 1. He knows I don't like him.

Supporting detail: 2. Punch sheds everywhere.

Supporting detail: 3. Punch is an early riser.

PRACTICE 1

Look at each of the following five paragraphs and then complete the outline for each paragraph. Notice that words such as *first, also, another,* and *finally* often signal each new item of support.

1. [1]Being a celebrity is often difficult. [2]First of all, celebrities have to look almost perfect all the time. [3]There's always a photographer ready to take an unflattering picture of a famous person looking dumpy in old clothes. [4]Celebrities also sacrifice their private lives. [5]Their personal struggles, divorces, or family tragedies all end up as front-page news. [6]Last, and most frightening of all, celebrities are in constant danger of the wrong kind of attention. [7]Threatening letters and even physical attacks from crazy fans are things a celebrity must contend with.

   Point: _____

   _____

   Supporting detail: 1. _____
   Supporting detail: 2. _____
   Supporting detail: 3. _____

   _____

2. [1]People lie for different reasons. [2]One common reason is to avoid hurting someone's feelings. [3]For example, a friend might ask, "Do you like my new haircut?" [4]If you think it's ugly, you might still answer, "Yes." [5]Another common reason for lying is to avoid a fight. [6]Say a friend angers you and then asks, "Are you upset with me?" [7]You might answer, "No," to avoid an argument. [8]People also lie so that they'll fit in, as when you listen to a boring person and politely say, "That's interesting." [9]In addition, people lie to avoid spending more time with someone. [10]For instance, you might lie, "I have to go now."

   Point: _____

   _____

   Supporting detail: 1. _____
   Supporting detail: 2. _____
   Supporting detail: 3. _____
   Supporting detail: 4. _____

3. [1]You don't have to scare your family with statistics about heart attacks. [2]There are several positive ways to encourage your family to exercise more often. [3]To begin with, get them to exercise more often by emphasizing how good they'll feel and how much better they'll look if they work out on a regular basis. [4]A second method you can use is to set an example. [5]If they see you walking to stores rather than driving, they might be encouraged

to do likewise. [6]Finally, make exercise a family activity. [7]Suggest that the whole family go hiking or camping together, take up early morning jogging, or join the Y at the group rate.

Point: _____

_____

Supporting detail: 1. _____

Supporting detail: 2. _____

Supporting detail: 3. _____

4. [1]Serious depression, as opposed to the fleeting kind we all feel at times, has definite warning signs. [2]One symptom of depression is a change in sleep patterns—either sleeplessness or sleeping too much. [3]In addition, abnormal eating patterns may develop, either eating too much or loss of appetite. [4]A third sign is trouble in thinking or concentrating—even to the point of finding it difficult to read a magazine or newspaper. [5]And last of all, a general feeling of hopelessness may signal depression. [6]People feel indifferent to their families and jobs and may begin to think that life is not worth living.

Point: _____

_____

Supporting detail: 1. _____

Supporting detail: 2. _____

Supporting detail: 3. _____

Supporting detail: 4. _____

5. [1]Several factors can interfere with having a good memory. [2]For one thing, there can be a lack of motivation. [3]Without a real desire to learn or remember something, you probably won't. [4]Also a factor is a lack of practice. [5]To stay sharp, memory skills, like any other skill, must be used on a regular basis. [6]Yet another factor that can hurt memory is self-doubt. [7]If you're convinced you won't remember something, you probably won't. [8]In addition, distraction can interfere with memory. [9]If you're distracted by a television or by conversation nearby, try to find a quiet environment before trying to commit something to memory.

Point: _____

_____

Supporting detail: 1. _____

Supporting detail: 2. _____

Supporting detail: 3. _____

Supporting detail: 4. _____

A Note on Topics

As you learned in Chapter 2, the **topic** is a general subject. A good reader looks for the topic of a selection and then the idea that is expressed about that topic. A good writer starts with a topic and then decides what idea to advance about that topic. In the outlines you have just considered, it is easy to identify the topics and the ideas about the topics:

Topic	Topic sentence (main idea)
My dog Punch	I have several reasons for wanting to get rid of Punch.
Celebrities	Being a celebrity is often difficult.
Why people lie	People lie for different reasons.
Exercise	There are several possible ways to encourage your family to exercise more often.
Depression	Serious depression has definite warning signs.
Memory	Several factors can interfere with having a good memory.

PRACTICE 2

Here are fifteen topics. See if you can write main ideas about any five of them. Put your topic sentences in the spaces provided.

Examples

Teacher	My senior business teacher, Mrs. Catherine, was the best teacher I ever had.
Fast-food restaurants	Given a choice, I prefer a fast-food restaurant to a diner.
My dog	Rusty, my golden retriever, has some odd habits.

Living at home	College classes	Night person
TV commercials	Boss	My dog (or cat)
Fast-food restaurant	Exercise	Texting
Teacher	Landlord	Alcohol
Drivers	Sleep	Bad habits

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

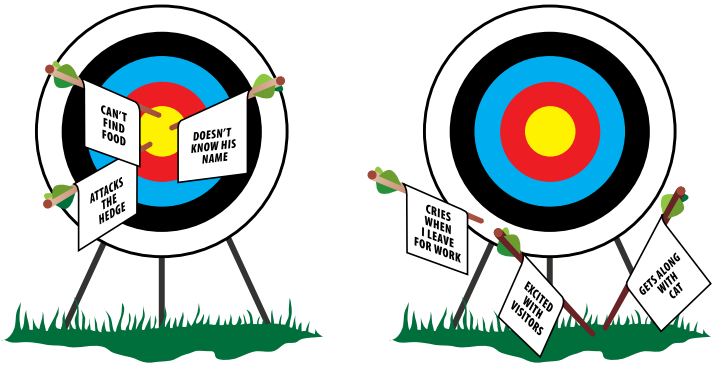
4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

Staying on Point



One common mistake in writing a paper is to go off point. Think of your point as the bull's-eye in a target. Every sentence and detail in a paper should be **relevant**, meaning that it hits the bull's-eye—it supports your point. Otherwise, your paper will not be convincing. Instead of hitting the target and proving your point, your "support" will be **irrelevant**. In other words, it will miss the point completely.

Let's say you decide your point is going to be that your family car is a lemon. If you then provide details about the car's good features, you are going off point. Or perhaps your point is that your aunt is a generous person. If you provide details about her sense of humor or odd habits, you are going off point. Or your point could be that your apartment is not a good place to live. If you provide details about the convenient location of the apartment, you're missing the target.

Look at the following outline of a paragraph. The point is followed by six facts, only three of which are on target in supporting the point. The other facts are irrelevant to the point. See if you can check the three **relevant** statements of support—the ones that hit the bull's-eye.

Point: My dog Otis is not very bright.

___ 1. He's five years old and doesn't respond to his name yet.

___ 2. He cries when I leave for work every day.

___ 3. He always gets excited when visitors arrive.

___ 4. He often attacks the backyard hedge as if it's a hostile animal.

___ 5. He gets along very well with my neighbor's cat.

___ 6. I often have to put food in front of him because he can't find it by himself.

Now read the following comments on the six items to see which ones you should have checked and why.

Explanation

1. Most dogs know their names. Otis's unfamiliarity with his own name reveals a weak memory, and memory is one aspect of intelligence. You should have checked this item.
2. Even an intelligent dog might be sad when its companions leave the house.
3. Both bright and not-so-bright dogs are happy to see old and new human friends.
4. The inability to distinguish between a bush and an animal—friendly or hostile—suggests a lack of analytical skills. You should have checked this item.
5. Dogs of all degrees of intelligence have been known to be friendly with cats.
6. Most dogs recognize food much more often than their owners would like them to. Otis's inability to find food clearly indicates poor problem-solving skills. You should also have checked this item.

As illustrated on the previous page, you want all the details you provide in a paper to be on target and hit the bull's-eye in support of your point.

PRACTICE 3

Each point is followed by three statements that provide relevant, on-target support and three that do not. In the spaces, write the letters of the three **relevant** statements of support.

1. **Point: I'm a perfect example of someone who has "math anxiety."**
   - A. I feel dread every time I sit down to take our Friday math quiz.
   - B. Fear of math is almost as widespread as fear of public speaking.
   - C. During my last math test, I "froze" and didn't even try to answer most of the questions.
   - D. I also have a great deal of anxiety when I sit down to write a paper.
   - E. I turned down a summer job as a salesclerk because I would have had to figure out how much change customers should get back.
   - F. I used to be afraid to raise my hand in class, but now it's easier for me to answer questions.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

2. **Point: Elephants are very intelligent animals.**
   - A. For years, hunters shot elephants to obtain the ivory from their tusks.
   - B. Like chimps, elephants can recognize their reflections in mirrors.
   - C. Elephants tear off branches of trees to use as fly swatters.
   - D. Elephants have been seen keeping vigil over their dead companions.
   - E. An elephant can live as long as sixty-five years.
   - F. Elephants should not be forced to perform in circuses.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

3. **Point: Drinking coffee can be bad for people.**
   - A. Some people don't like the taste of decaffeinated coffees.
   - B. Coffee in the evening can interfere with sleep at night.
   - C. As addictions go, coffee is less dangerous than tobacco.
   - D. Too much coffee can cause the hands to shake.
   - E. Drinking too much coffee can lead to a faster heartbeat and light-headedness.
   - F. Most coffees cost under five dollars a pound.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

4. **Point: If you think school is difficult, it's even harder for older students.**

   A. Studies show that more and more adults are returning to school.
   B. It takes a lot of work to re-learn study habits.
   C. Many older students have family and job responsibilities in addition to classes.
   D. Some older students are afraid of not "fitting in."
   E. It is never too late to gain new knowledge.
   F. Older students can contribute to class discussions by talking about their "real-world" experiences.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

5. **Point: Workers in early American factories led difficult lives.**

   A. The average work day was twelve hours long.
   B. Early factory workers were paid pennies an hour.
   C. Female factory workers often worked in textile mills.
   D. The first American factories were built in the late 1700s.
   E. All workers on power machines risked accidents that could maim or kill.
   F. Labor unions have greatly improved conditions in today's factories.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

6. **Point: Schools should eliminate the summer vacation.**

   A. It costs too much money for school buildings to remain empty in the summer months.
   B. Students have more energy than adults.
   C. Year-round school can better prepare students for year-round work in the adult world.
   D. During summer classes, schools should be air-conditioned.
   E. Students will learn more and forget less if they attend school twelve months a year.
   F. Students won't be able to take summer jobs that would provide money for college.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

7. **Point: Some people have very poor telephone manners.**

   A. They never identify themselves, but just begin the conversation.
   B. They often make their calls on cordless phones.
   C. They have an unlisted telephone number.
   D. They conduct conversations with people around them at the same time they're talking on the phone.
   E. Some people don't like to talk on the phone.
   F. They often call around 6 p.m., which is most people's dinner hour.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

8. **Point: My father's boss is an unpleasant man to work for.**

   A. He barks orders and never asks for an employee's opinion.
   B. His fashion-plate wife is said to be even nastier than he is.
   C. His office is decorated in dull browns and grays.
   D. Even when he invites employees out to lunch, he expects them to pick up their own checks.
   E. He changes his mind so often that an employee who pleased him on Friday can be in the doghouse by Monday.
   F. He once accumulated so many parking tickets that the police actually came to his home to arrest him.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

9. **Point: There are some simple ways to save money at the supermarket.**

   A. Avoid products which charge extra for packaging, such as cheese wrapped individually by slice.
   B. Buy store brands of basic items instead of expensive name-brand products.
   C. Some people organize a shopping list alphabetically; others group items by categories.
   D. Shop when you are not hungry, so that you won't be tempted to buy pricey treats.
   E. Go to the store at odd hours or on weekdays to reduce the time you spend in lines.
   F. Buy locally grown fruits and vegetables, which are often better for you than canned or frozen ones.

   Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

10. **Point: Nobody in this neighborhood will miss the Martins when they move.**

    A. Both the Martins are retired now and rarely leave their home.

    B. They keep their poor dog chained to a tree 24 hours a day, and it howls for much of that time.

    C. They recently had a tree removed from their front yard because its roots were growing into the sewer line.

    D. Over the past few years, the outside of their house has begun to look shabbier and shabbier.

    E. Mr. Martin has been sick for years, so you can understand his being short-tempered.

    F. When the neighborhood kids play ball anywhere near their house, Mr. Martin yells at them, "Keep your ball game off my property!"

    Items that logically support the point: _____ _____ _____

PRACTICE 4

Here is another activity that will sharpen your ability to decide whether evidence truly supports a point. Each point below is followed by three items of information. Put a check (✓) next to the **one** item that **logically** supports the point.

1. **Point: That child is very curious.**

    _____ A. [1]He was reciting the alphabet when he was only three years old. [2]By age seven, he was doing math at a fourth-grade level. [3]He skipped third and fifth grades.

    _____ B. [1]His favorite word is "NO!" [2]He doesn't start picking up his toys until the fifth or sixth time he is told. [3]Mealtime is a battle to get him to eat properly.

    _____ C. [1]He has taken apart all the clocks in the house to see how they work. [2]He borrowed his father's hammer to break rocks because he "wanted to see what they looked like inside." [3]He is forever asking questions that start with "How" and "Why."

2. **Point: Aunt Isabel is my least favorite relative.**

_____ A. [1]When we meet, she always has something critical to say, such as "What have you done with your hair?" or "You look terrible in that color." [2]She calls my sister "the smart sister" and me "the dumb one." [3]On my birthday, she said, "I didn't think you wanted a present."

_____ B. [1]She works as a billing clerk at a hospital. [2]She dropped out of high school, but earned her GED and then attended community college. [3]She's held the job for more than 15 years and has been the hospital's "Employee of the Month" a number of times.

_____ C. [1]Isabel is about five foot seven and is a little on the heavy side. [2]She wears her hair very short and always has on long dangly earrings. [3]She's almost 50 but looks younger. [4]She wears very little makeup—just some mascara and sometimes lip gloss.

3. **Point: Our biology teacher is lazy.**

_____ A. [1]He has his top students present the lessons to the class so he doesn't have to do anything. [2]If someone is having trouble in class, he tells him or her to get help from one of the other students. [3]So he doesn't have to grade papers, he allows us to grade each other's homework and test papers, even midterm and final exams.

_____ B. [1]His favorite saying is, "There is no such thing as partial credit. [2]Either the answer is right or it isn't." [3]We can expect at least two hours of biology homework every night, and more on weekends and holidays. [4]Even the best students in class have trouble finishing his tests before the end of the period, and the average grade for his class is a C.

_____ C. [1]He always arrives exactly on time for class; you could set your watch by him. [2]He predictably begins with two or three questions, then lectures for most of the period, and with five minutes to go, writes on the board exactly what he wants us to read before the next class.

4. **Point: Margo is a very rude worker.**

_____ A. [1]She can barely stay awake while at work. [2]Almost every day, she arrives at the store a few minutes late, having slept till the last minute. [3]She works in slow motion, and it takes her so long to do any one thing that people never ask for her help. [4]If she didn't spend the day pumping herself full of caffeine, she probably would not be able to move at all.

_____ B. [1]She keeps customers waiting while she talks with a coworker. [2]When someone asks her about a sale item, she snaps, "If it isn't on the shelf, we don't have it!" [3]When her boss isn't watching her, she answers the telephone by saying, "Yeah, what do you want?"

_____ C. [1]She can answer the phone, ring up a customer's purchases, and count large amounts of money all at the same time. [2]She often volunteers to help customers bring their bags to their cars. [3]She does not mind taking time to answer a customer's question or help someone stock a shelf.

5. **Point: That roller coaster is dangerous.**

_____ A. [1]It is slower than any other roller coaster in the state. [2]The curves of its track are so wide and the hills are so shallow that a ride on this roller coaster seems like a drive in the country. [3]People don't scream when they ride it. [4]Instead, they enjoy the view from above the park.

_____ B. [1]It is known as one of the best roller coasters in the country. [2]People will wait in lines for hours just to try it. [3]At certain points it reaches the same speeds as cars do on highways. [4]The track is so tall and long that you can see it miles away.

_____ C. [1]Last year, it broke down several times, leaving people stranded in their cars sixty feet off the ground. [2]In most cars, the seatbelts are torn and don't always buckle properly. [3]One area of the track shakes and makes a strange grinding sound whenever a car passes over it.

6. **Point: Greg is irresponsible.**

_____ A. [1]He gives up his bus seat to elderly commuters. [2]When he sees people carrying heavy packages or struggling with squirming children, he rushes to open doors to help them out.

_____ B. [1]No matter how much trouble I'm having with my English assignment, he refuses to do any of it for me. [2]He says that between his own homework and his job, he doesn't have time. [3]But he always gets B's, and I have trouble getting C's. [4]Furthermore, when I need someone

to cover for me at work so that I can see my girlfriend, he's always too busy with something else to help me out.

_____ C. [1]He never pays his bills on time. [2]When he borrows things, he returns them damaged, or not at all. [3]He is usually late for appointments, if he even remembers them at all.

7. **Point: The meal I cooked for my girlfriend was horrible.**

_____ A. [1]The chicken took an hour to prepare and two hours to cook. [2]I had to travel for twenty miles to find a produce store that sold the vegetables I wanted. [3]In order to make all this food, I had to buy a whole new set of pots and pans. [4]Afterward, it took me hours to clean the kitchen and wash the dishes.

_____ B. [1]My girlfriend's car would not start when she wanted to come over. [2]By the time she arrived, she was two hours late and very angry. [3]As we sat down to eat, all she could talk about was how much it would cost to have her car fixed. [4]When I tried to change the subject, she said I never listen to her, so I apologized. [5]Then she accused me of apologizing too much. [6]We both got so mad that we hardly touched dinner.

_____ C. [1]The chicken came out so tough and dry that I could barely cut it with a steak knife. [2]I overcooked the fresh vegetables so much that they changed from a bright green color to the color of an army jeep. [3]The cake I tried to bake collapsed into itself, turning into a shapeless chewy mass that resembled a giant cookie.

8. **Point: High-school proms should be banned.**

_____ A. [1]Proms pressure students to spend a ridiculous amount of money on gowns, tuxes, flowers, and even limos. [2]Prom preparations distract students for many weeks from the real business of school, which is education. [3]In addition, the social pressure to get a date for the prom makes many people miserable.

_____ B. [1]Proms usually feature a theme, and the room the prom is held in is decorated according to that theme. [2]Often a photographer is hired to take pictures of the couples as they arrive. [3]Some proms even have thrones set up for the prom king and queen.

_____ C. [1]At most schools, proms are chaperoned by teachers and administrators. [2]Of course, the students would prefer that no adults were in the room, especially adults who should stay in the classroom or office where they belong. [3]What they don't realize is that the chaperones are often as ill at ease as the students they are watching.

9. **Point: Neil is a hypocrite—he usually does the opposite of what he says.**

_____ A. [1]He spent a half hour talking and laughing with someone yesterday, then later confided to me, "I can't stand that man!" [2]He lectures his daughters about the dangers of drug addiction, but he is a heavy drinker and smoker.

_____ B. [1]He waits until December to put in winter storm windows, and his Christmas tree is often still up in March. [2]He usually pays his bills a few days after they are due, and he never gets around to dental or medical checkups until real problems develop.

_____ C. [1]After thirty-seven years of marriage, he still writes love letters to his wife. [2]He took early retirement so he could stay home and care for her when an illness left her bedridden. [3]He never leaves the house without bringing her back something special.

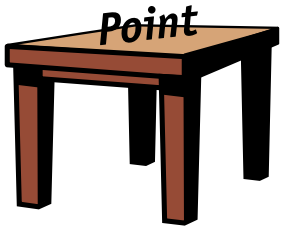
10. **Point: My boss is considerate.**

_____ A. [1]She greets employees and customers alike with a warm smile and a hearty, "Hi! How are you today?" [2]She is forever telling us, "A stranger is just a friend you haven't met yet."

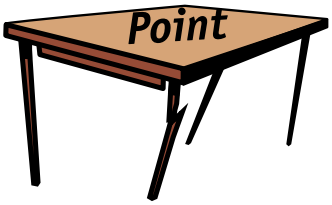
_____ B. [1]Instead of giving us orders, she asks us to do things. [2]She always thanks an employee for completing a task. [3]She often helps out when she sees that things are getting stressful.

_____ C. [1]Getting a raise out of her is impossible—even for long-term employees. [2]Her secretary is still using an old typewriter because the boss won't buy anything new. [3]We had to have the retirement party for the office manager during our lunch hour, and the boss was waiting by the time clock when we got back—to make sure we weren't a minute late.

Providing Enough Support



STRONG, SPECIFIC SUPPORT



THIN, VAGUE SUPPORT

Another common mistake in writing a paper is not providing enough *specific* details. Truly specific details excite the reader's interest; they *show* what the writer means. They are the opposite of dull, wordy writing that provides thin support for a point.

Specific details, as shown in the illustration above, provide solid support for a point. Thin and vague details do not. Lazy writers are content to produce undersupported paragraphs, but good writers are willing to take the time needed to think carefully about and to build a solid paper.

PRACTICE 5

Each of the ten points below is followed by two items of support. Put a check (✓) next to the item that is specific and clearly shows us the writer's point. By contrast, the other item will be vague, dull, or wordy and lack sharp details.

1. **I could tell I was coming down with the flu.**

_____ A. [1]I began feeling lousy while I was at school. [2]By the time I got home, it was even worse. [3]The symptoms kept developing, one after another. [4]I went to bed feeling horrible, and there was no doubt that I was really in for it. [5]I could tell I was going to feel awful for days. [6]Getting the flu is such a miserable experience that I really would not wish it on anyone.

_____ B. [1]I know exactly when the flu hit. [2]I was at my desk when I felt a tickle in my throat. [3]I began to cough, and the cough refused to go away. [4]A few minutes later, the words on my computer screen began to swim. [5]I could feel a deep headache developing behind my eyes. [6]By the time I got home later that afternoon, I had a fever of 102. [7]I crawled into bed shivering, even with three blankets. [8]And I was aching so badly I felt as though I'd been hit by a truck.

2. **My brother is accident-prone.**

_____ A. [1]Once he tried to open a tube of Krazy Glue with his teeth. [2]When the cap came loose, glue squirted out and sealed his lips shut. [3]They had to be pried open in a hospital ER.

_____ B. [1]Even when he does simple jobs, he seems to get into trouble. [2]This can lead to funny but sometimes dangerous results. [3]Things never seem to go right for him, and he often needs the help of others to get out of one problem or another.

3. **When money gets tight, our family finds ways to economize.**

_____ A. [1]There are a lot of corners we can cut when we need to. [2]If you think about it, there are plenty of unnecessary expenses every day that people can cut out when necessary. [3]Food and entertainment are two categories that eat up a lot of money needlessly. [4]Those expenses may not seem like a lot individually, but they can add up to quite a bit. [5]My family has gotten good at being aware of such small ways to save.

_____ B. [1]We have a simple breakfast like oatmeal rather than bacon and eggs. [2]We pack lunches rather than eat in the school cafeteria or restaurants. [3]We plan ahead for those lunches, buying economy sizes of peanut butter, lunch meat, and fruit. [4]We cut back on buying impulse items like candy, chips, and coffee or soda drinks. [5]Rather than going out to the movies at eight dollars a head, we rent a DVD and make popcorn at home.

4. **Our old car is ready for the junk pile.**

_____ A. [1]If the car's problems were just cosmetic, we might be able to live with them, but it's worse than that. [2]Our car has major mechanical problems that would cost more to fix than would be worth it. [3]Even if we did fix them, that would leave a lot of smaller problems to deal with. [4]Those problems not only affect its appearance but definitely make the car unsafe. [5]It's time to say goodbye to the old heap.

_____ B. [1]The transmission slips, and our mechanic told us it would cost $2,000 to get it repaired. [2]That's more than the car is worth. [3]Because the engine burns oil, we have to add a quart a week. [4]In addition, the air conditioner and heater are shot, the upholstery is stained or torn, the cover has fallen off the glove box, the rear-view mirror is loose, and the driver's window sticks much of the time in the "down" position.

5. **The little boy was in a stubborn mood.**

_____ A. [1]When I asked him to do something, he gave me nothing but trouble. [2]He seemed determined to make things difficult for me, for he had made his mind up.

_____ B. [1]When I asked him to stop playing in the yard and come indoors, he looked me squarely in the eye and shouted "NO!" and then spelled it out: "N…O!"

6. **The food in the cafeteria is terrible some days.**

_____ A. [1]They serve canned vegetables, which are not as good as fresh ones. [2]The macaroni and cheese does not do anything for your appetite, and the pizza is not as good as the kind you can get at a pizzeria. [3]Some of the meat is virtually inedible. [4]Lots of luck if you want something good to drink.

_____ B. [1]The string beans and other canned vegetables are limp and salty, and the macaroni and cheese is gluey and tasteless. [2]The pizza is usually spongy and cold and does not have much cheese on it. [3]You'd need diamond-tipped teeth to be able to chew the beef in the stew. [4]The hamburgers taste like rubber.

7. **Our new kitten causes us lots of trouble.**

_____ A. [1]He has shredded the curtains in my bedroom with his claws. [2]He nearly drowned when he crawled into the washing machine. [3]And my hands look like raw hamburger from his playful scratches and bites.

_____ B. [1]He seems to destroy everything he touches. [2]He's always getting into places where he doesn't belong. [3]Sometimes he plays too roughly, and that can be painful.

8. **Speaking before a group is a problem for many people.**

_____ A. [1]Many people will go to almost any length to avoid speaking to a group. [2]If they are forced to do it, they can feel so anxious that they actually develop physical symptoms. [3]If asked, people will often prefer that anything happen to them as an alternative to having to speak in public.

_____ B. [1]Some people will pretend to be ill to avoid speaking publicly. [2]Stage fright, stammering, and blushing are frequent reactions. [3]When asked to rank their worst fears, people often list public speaking as even worse than death.

9. **My uncle knew very little about cooking when he got his first apartment.**

_____ A. [1]He had to live on whatever he had in the freezer for a while. [2]He was not any good in the kitchen and went through a trial-and-error process of learning how to prepare things to eat. [3]More often than not with his meals, he would make mistakes first, and someone who knows what to do in preparing food would probably not believe some of the things that he did.

_____ B. [1]The only dinners he ate for the first three weeks were frozen turkey or chicken dinners. [2]When he got tired of Cheerios for breakfast, he tried to cook an egg by putting a whole egg in the microwave, where it exploded. [3]Then for lunch one day, instead of a bologna sandwich, he attempted to make a grilled cheese sandwich by putting slices of cheese and bread in a toaster.

10. **My family has real problems.**

_____ A. [1]My mom was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and hypertension, but we cannot afford the medications she should now be taking. [2]Since my dad lost his job as an insurance agent, we've started to fall behind on our mortgage payments. [3]Then my sister was caught shoplifting cosmetics from our local drug store.

_____ B. [1]My mom has some serious health problems, and it is really going to be a challenge for us to try to deal with them. [2]My dad is not employed at the present, and so there is no money coming in. [3]As a result, we're having to deal with major financial difficulties. [4]Then my sister has been acting out because of all the stress in the family.